

# What Is A Quality Teacher?\*

This document is a brief overview from a literature search on definitions of quality teaching. The definitions of a quality teacher that are included do not represent an exhaustive literature search, but rather, reflect criteria that are considered most important by national organizations or researchers who are prominent in the field of teacher quality research. These sources include:

- NBPTS (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards)
- INTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium)
- Charlotte Danielson
- Linda Darling-Hammond
- The Abell Foundation
- Pennsylvania & Florida
- Federal “No Child Left Behind Act” (ESEA 2001)

## **The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)**

The National Board’s mission includes “maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do.” The Board outlines five competency areas:

1. Teachers who are committed to students and their learning should:
  - believe all students can learn;
  - treat students equitably, recognizing individual differences and accounting for these differences in their practice;
  - adjust their practice based on observation and knowledge of their students;
  - understand how students develop and learn;
  - develop students’ respect for learning;
  - develop students’ self-esteem, character, respect for others.

---

\* This document is adapted from an outline of definitions of a quality teacher created by the Teacher Quality and Supply Study Group, The Education Policy and Leadership Center, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, May 2002.

This handout was prepared by the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS), the mid-Atlantic regional educational laboratory.

2. Teachers should know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students. They should:
  - understand how their subject is related to other disciplines;
  - develop students' critical and analytical thinking skills;
  - understand the preconceptions students have about a subject area;
  - use multiple strategies to convey a concept;
  - teach students how to pose and solve their own problems.
3. Teachers must be responsible for managing and monitoring student learning. They should:
  - create environments that engage students and use time effectively;
  - engage others (both students and colleagues) to assist them;
  - be aware of ineffective and damaging instructional practices;
  - set norms for social interaction;
  - assess the growth of both individual students and the class as a whole;
  - be able to explain a student's performance to parents.
4. Teachers should think systematically about their practice and learn from experience. They should:
  - exemplify the virtues they seek to inspire in students;
  - make decisions not only based on research, but also on their experience;
  - be life-long learners;
  - think critically about their own practice and try employing new theories.
5. Teachers should be members of learning communities. This means that they should:
  - work collaboratively with others to develop instructional policy, curriculum development, and staff development;
  - evaluate school progress and the allocation of school resources relating to state and local educational objectives;
  - have knowledge of special school and community resources for students and put these resources to work;
  - work collaboratively with parents and engage their participation.

*Reference:*

[http://www.nbpts.org/standards/know\\_do/intro.html](http://www.nbpts.org/standards/know_do/intro.html)

## **The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)**

The **Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC)** developed standards for what new teachers should be able to do. According to these standards, new teachers should:

1. Understand the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structure of the disciplines taught; create learning experiences to make these concepts meaningful to students.
2. Understand how children learn and develop; provide learning opportunities that support their development.
3. Understand how students differ in their approaches to learning; create instructional opportunities adapted to diverse learners.
4. Understand and uses variety of instructional strategies.
5. Create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
6. Use knowledge of communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction.
7. Plan instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
8. Understand and uses formal and informal assessment strategies.
9. Reflect on teaching.
10. Foster relationships with colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community.

*Reference:*

<http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/books/danielson96book.html>

## **Charlotte Danielson**

In her book *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*, Educational Testing System (ETS) administrator Charlotte Danielson outlined measures relating to quality teaching organized into four domains, each with several components. These measures are:

### Domain 1: Planning and Preparation:

1. Demonstrates knowledge of content and pedagogy
2. Demonstrates knowledge of students relating to their age group, varied approaches to learning, skills and knowledge, and interests and cultural heritage
3. Selects instructional goals that have value, clarity, and balance, and are suitable for diverse students
4. Demonstrates knowledge of resources for teachers and for students
5. Designs coherent instruction using appropriate learning activities, instructional materials and resources, instructional groups, and lesson and unit structure
6. Assesses student learning using techniques that are congruent with instructional goals, criteria and standards, and uses assessments for planning

### Domain 2: The Classroom Environment:

1. Creates a classroom environment of respect and rapport in both student-teacher and student-student interactions
2. Establishes a culture for learning, instilling the importance of content and student pride in work, and sets expectations for learning and achievement
3. Manages classroom procedures, including instructional groups, transitions, materials and supplies; performance of noninstructional duties and supervision of paraprofessionals and volunteers
4. Manages student behavior, setting expectations, and monitoring behavior, and responding to misbehavior
5. Organizes physical space safely and in a way that enhances the effective use of physical resources for learning

### Domain 3: Instruction:

1. Communicates clearly and accurately in oral and written directions and procedures
2. Uses questioning and discussion techniques to encourage student participation
3. Engages students in learning through representation of content, activities and assignments, student grouping, instructional materials and resources, and structure and pacing of instruction
4. Provides feedback to students in a timely fashion that is accurate, substantive, constructive, and specific
5. Demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness in adjusting lessons, responding to students, and displaying persistence

#### Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities:

1. Reflects on teaching
2. Maintains accurate records of student work and progress, as well as noninstructional records
3. Communicates with families to provide information about the instructional program and individual students and to engage families in the instructional program
4. Contributes to the school and district
5. Grows and develops professionally in terms of enhanced content knowledge and pedagogical skill and service to the profession
6. Shows professionalism through service to students, advocacy, and decision making

#### *Reference:*

Danielson, Charlotte. Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development: Alexandria, VA, 1996.

### **Linda Darling-Hammond**

In 2000, Stanford University professor **Linda Darling-Hammond** conducted a 50-state survey and determined that the following factors are related to teacher quality and increased student achievement:

- Verbal ability
- Content knowledge
- Education coursework on teaching methods in their discipline
- Scores on state licensing exams that measure both basic skills and teaching knowledge
- Teaching behaviors, including purposefully and diagnostically using a broad repertoire of approaches skillfully that respond to students and curricular needs
- Ongoing voluntary professional learning
- Enthusiasm for learning
- Flexibility, creativity, and adaptability
- Amount of teaching experience (teachers with less than three years of classroom practice are less effective; little difference beyond this)
- Demonstrated skill in asking students higher order questions and probing their responses

#### *Reference:*

Darling-Hammond, Linda. 2000. Teacher quality and student achievement: A review of state policy evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives* 8 (1). Available: <http://olam.ed.asu.edu/epaa/v8n1/>

## **The Abell Foundation**

The Abell Foundation is dedicated to the enhancement of the quality of life in Baltimore, Maryland. It has a broad interest in public education and in educational capacity building for poor children. The Foundation created some controversy with its 2001 research report, *Teacher Certification Reconsidered: Stumbling for Quality*. In examining 150 studies from the past 50 years, the report explores the relationship between teacher preparation and student achievement. The report concludes that "...teacher certification is neither an efficient nor an effective means by which to ensure a competent teaching force. Worse, it is often counterproductive." The findings of the report most important for those considering aspects of a quality teacher include:

- The backgrounds and attributes characterizing effective teachers are more likely to be found *outside* the domain of schools of education.
- The teacher attribute found consistently to be most related to raising student achievement is *verbal ability*.
- Teachers who had graduated from more selective colleges and universities had a greater impact on student achievement.

## **How Do States Define Teacher Quality? (Pennsylvania & Florida)**

### **Pennsylvania**

Regulations passed by the State Board of Education regarding Certification of Professional Personnel (Title 22, Chapter 49, Section 49.81) state that individuals seeking teacher certification should meet the following criteria (NOTE: These are basic proficiencies that the Commonwealth believes ALL teaching candidates should meet, not indicators of QUALITY as defined by the state):

(B) Instructional certificates will be issued to candidates who meet the following standards:

(1) The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline the teacher teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for all students.

(2) The teacher understands how all children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, career and personal development.

(3) The teacher understands how students differ in their ability and approaches to learning and creates opportunities that foster achievement of diverse learners in the inclusive classroom.

(4) The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies, including interdisciplinary learning experiences, to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving and performance skills.

(5) The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-motivation.

(6) The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal and media communication techniques supported by appropriate technology to foster active inquiry, collaboration and supportive interaction in the classroom.

(7) The teacher plans instruction based upon knowledge of subject matter, students, the community and curriculum goals.

(8) The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social and physical development of the learner.

(9) The teacher thinks systematically about practice, learns from experience, seeks the advice of others, draws upon educational research and scholarship and actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.

(10) The teacher contributes to school effectiveness by collaborating with other professionals and parents, by using community resources, and by working as an advocate to improve opportunities for student learning.

**Source**

The provisions of this § 49.81 amended September 24, 1999, effective September 25, 1999, 29 Pa.B. 4954. Immediately preceding text appears at serial page (227863).

*Reference:*

<http://www.pacode.com/secure/data/022/chapter49/chap49toc.html>

**Florida**

Florida's education law contains a section that directly addresses the issue of teacher quality:

**231.02 Teacher quality; legislative findings.**

(1) The Legislature intends to implement a comprehensive approach to increase students' academic achievement and improve teaching quality. The Legislature recognizes that professional educators shape the future of this state and the nation by developing the knowledge and skills of our future workforce and laying the foundation for good citizenship and full participation in community and civic life. The Legislature also recognizes its critical role in meeting the state's educational goals and preparing all students to achieve at the high levels set by the Sunshine State Standards.

(2) The Legislature further finds that effective educators are able to do the following:

- (a) Write and speak in a logical and understandable style, using appropriate grammar and sentence structure, and demonstrate a command of standard English, enunciation, clarity of oral directions, and pace and precision in speaking.
- (b) Read, comprehend, and interpret professional and other written material.
- (c) Compute, think logically, and solve problems.
- (d) Recognize signs of students' difficulty with the reading and computational process and apply appropriate measures to improve students' reading and computational performance.
- (e) Recognize patterns of physical, social, emotional, and intellectual development in students, including exceptional students in the regular classroom.
- (f) Recognize and demonstrate awareness of the educational needs of students who have limited proficiency in English and employ appropriate teaching strategies.
- (g) Use and integrate appropriate technology in teaching and learning processes and in managing, evaluating, and improving instruction.
- (h) Use assessment and other diagnostic strategies to assist the continuous development and acquisition of knowledge and understanding of the learner.
- (i) Use teaching and learning strategies that include consideration of each student's learning styles, needs, and background.
- (j) Demonstrate the ability to maintain a positive, collaborative relationship with students' families to increase student achievement.
- (k) Recognize signs of tendency toward violence and severe emotional distress in students and apply techniques of crisis intervention.



- (l) Recognize signs of alcohol and drug abuse in students and know how to appropriately work with such students and seek assistance designed to prevent future abuse.
- (m) Recognize the physical and behavioral indicators of child abuse and neglect and know rights and responsibilities regarding reporting.
- (n) Demonstrate the ability to maintain a positive environment in the classroom while achieving order and discipline.
- (o) Demonstrate the ability to grade student performance effectively.
- (p) Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the value of, and strategies for, promoting parental involvement in education.

*Reference:*

[www.myfloridaeducation.com/cert](http://www.myfloridaeducation.com/cert)

Chapter 231.

## **How Does the *No Child Left Behind Act* Define Teacher Quality?**

From the Education Commission of the States web site on ESEA 2001:  
([http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=html/Special/ESEA\\_main.htm](http://www.ecs.org/ecsmain.asp?page=html/Special/ESEA_main.htm))

The term "highly qualified teacher" means:

Public elementary and secondary teachers must be fully licensed or certified by the state and must not have had any certification or licensure requirements waived on an emergency, temporary or provisional\*\* basis.

New public elementary school teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree and pass a state test demonstrating subject knowledge and teaching skills in reading, writing, mathematics and other areas of any basic elementary school curriculum.

New middle or secondary school teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree and demonstrate competency in each of the academic subjects taught, or complete an academic major or coursework equivalent to a major, a graduate degree or advanced certification.

Existing public elementary, middle and secondary teachers must have at least a bachelor's degree and meet the requirements described above, or demonstrate competency in all subjects taught. A state evaluation standard is to be used to judge competency. The evaluation standard must provide objective information about the teacher's knowledge in the subject taught and can consider, but not use as a primary criterion, time spent teaching the subject. (Title IX, Part A, Sec. 9101)

A teacher does not have to attain the highest level of certification to be considered "highly qualified." Initially licensed or certified teachers may also meet the requirements. Someone teaching a subject for which she or he has not demonstrated subject-matter competency, regardless of whether that teacher is fully certified, would not be considered "highly qualified."

Under most circumstances, teachers who participate in alternative-certification programs, and who meet the above requirements, would be considered "highly qualified."

*For additional information on implications for Teacher Quality as defined by the No Child Left Behind Act, see <http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/34/63/3463.pdf> for a special policy brief written by the Education Commission of the States.*

---

\*\* Note that, in some states, the term "provisional" is used to describe entry-level (though fully certified) teachers -- not teachers who do not yet have licenses. It is important to distinguish among (1) "provisional" licenses that allow employees to begin teaching while they pursue the requirements for certification or licensure, (2) licenses that make accommodation for certified teachers entering from other states who need to meet several additional state requirements and (3) licenses designated "provisional" in the certificate title to denote entry-level teachers who have met all certification requirements."